

Message Text

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S E C R E T ALGIERS 1638

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EGEN, AG, US

SUBJ: ROBINSON VISIT TO ALGIERS

1. ROBINSON VISIT ALGIERS JULY 20-21 WENT VERY WELL. FOLLOWING IS BRIEF SUMMARY OF HIGHLIGHTS. MORE DETAILED REPORTING OF CONVERSATIONS WILL BE SUBMITTED IN TURN FOLLOWING TELS THIS EVENING.

2. ROBINSON MET WITH MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND ENERGY ABDESSELAM MORNING AND AFTERNOON, JULY 21. IN BETWEEN MET FOR ONE HOUR WITH BOUMEDIENE AND WAS GUEST AT LUNCHEON AT HOTEL ST. GEORGE HOSTED BY SECRETARY GENERAL OF FOREIGN MINISTRY ABDELMALEK BENHABYLES. ABDESSELAM, ALTHOUGH EXPRESSING RESERVATIONS ABOUT RIGIDITY OF CRITERIA FOR SELECTION PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR ALLOCATION TO COMMISSIONS, ABOUT LACK OF IDEAS LINKAGE BETWEEN COMMISSIONS, AND ABOUT PROPOSED TIMETABLE FOR ACTICITIES OF 27 (HE THOUGHT 12 MONTHS INVERVAL BETWEEN MINISTERIAL MEETING OF 27 WAS TOO LONG), ACCEPTED IN GENERAL PROPOSED SCHEME OF RESUMED DIALOGUE. ABDESSELAM'S EXACT WORDS WERE "DANS L'ENSEMBLE NOUS SOMMES D'ACCORD." ROBINSON DID NOT GET INTO DETAILS WITH BOUMEDIENE BUT LATTER ALSO SPOKE IN MODERATE TERMS, SAID ALGERIANS WANTED TO RESUME DIALOGUE AND RAISED NO OBJECTIONS TO GENERAL OUTLINES OF OUR PORPOSAL.

3. BILATERAL. THERE WAS TIME FOR ONLY SHORT DISCUSSION

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BILATERAL ISSUES. FOLLOWING CAME UP HOWEVER:

A. CHEMICO CONTRACT. BOTH BOUMEDIENE AND ABDESSELAM EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CONTRACT FOR CONSTRUCTION OF GAS LIQUEFACTION PLANT AT ARZEW. THIS IS CONTRACT HELD BY CHEMICAL CONSTRUCTION COMPANY (CHEMICO), WITH TOTAL VALUE OF 350 MILLION DOLLARS. CHEMICO NOW SEEKING LARGE INCREASE IN CONTRACT PRICE AND ALGERIANS HAVE IMPRESSION THEY WANT TO RENEGOTIATE ENTIRE CONTRACT. BOURMDIENE DESCRIBED CHEMICO TACTICS AS "BLACKMAIL." ROBINSON PROMISED TO LOOK INTO MATTER. THIS IS FIRST WE HAVE HEARD OF MATTER AND WILL FOLLOW UP ASAP.

B. EASCOGAS AND DISTRIGAS CONTRACT. ABDESSELAM SAID ALGERIANS HAD ABOUT COMPLETED NEGOTIATIONS ON CONTRACTS FOR GAS SUPPLIES TO EASCOGAS AND DISTRIGAS, AND WERE MAKING PLANS TO ALLOCATE SKIKDA LNG TO THOSE COMPANIES. ALGERIANS WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE FOR FPC TO APPROVE CONTRACT AND WHAT HELP CAN BE GIVEN WITH FINANCING FOR CONSTRUCTION SKIKDA IV, V AND VI IN CONNECTION THESE CONTRACTS. ROBINSON PROMISED LOOK INTO.

C. ABDESSELAM ASKED IF EXIM TERMS COULD BE IMPROVED WITH REGARD CERTAIN CONTRACTS. CITED PFIZER-FLUOR CONTRACT FOR ANTIBIOTIC PLANT AND SAID FOUR-YEAR GRACE PERIOD OFFERED BY EXIM WAS TOO SHROT. ROBINSON PROMISED LOOK INTO BUT NOTED THAT FOR LOANS OF THIS SIZE (16 MILLION DOLLARS) LONGER PAYMENT PERIOD WAS DIFFICULT.

4. COMMENT: THERE NOTICEABLE IMPROVEMENT IN ATMOSPHERICS THIS VISIT AS COMPARED TO THOSE OF LAST ROBINSON VISIT. THIS REFLECTED IN EVERYTHING FROM EFFICIENCY OF ARRANGEMENTS TO ATTITUDES IN MEETINGS. ALGERIANS ARE ADOPTING POSITIVE STANCE. THEY SEEM GENUINELY INTERESTED IN ACCOMMODATION. WE DISCUSSED REASONS FOR THIS CHANGE BEFORE ROBINSON'S DEPARTURE FOR PARIS AND CONCLUDED THERE WERE PROBABLY THREE BASIC FACTORS AT WORK:

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A. ALGERIAN APPRECIATION THAT THERE HAS BEEN POSITIVE MOVEMENT IN OUR POSITION AND THAT WE ARE GIVING MORE WEIGHT TO REQUIREMENTS AND PROBLEMS OF LDCS.

B. THEY DO NOT WANT TO BE ISOLATED FROM SAUDIS AND IRANIANS, WHO ARE GOING ALONG WITH OUR PORPOSAL.

C. THEY WANT OUR HELP WITH BILATERAL PROBLEMS SUCH

AS CHEMICO CONTRACT MENTIONED ABOVE AND FEEL THIS IS NO
TIME TO BE ROCKING THE BOAT. DO NOT KNOW WHAT ALGERIAN PER-
FORMANCE WILL BE WHEN GROUP OF TEN MEETS IN OCTOBER BUT AT
LEAST AT THIS STAGE THEY ARE CONSIDERABLY MORE POSITIVE AND
MODERATE SOUNDING THAN THEY WERE A FEW WEEKS AGO. WE HOPE
THIS COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE WILL BE MAINTAINED.
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